

plane begins to etch tight circles and the pilot announces it will be a while before the san jose traffic controllers can "sequence" you into a landing pattern. a breeze arrives off the sierra. it slams the aircraft sideways and drops you a few fathoms beneath your stomach. eventually you do hit the runway. you are not the proverbial ton of bricks, but the runway is. passengers are already pencilling in appointments with their chiropractors.

you suggest that what the flight needs is a chaplain.

you have never had a more appreciative audience.

#### THERE IS STILL BEAUTY IN OUR WORLD

like most things that are good for you, racking up one's laps at the ymca pool is just the matter of getting oneself there and into the water in the first place, easing into the groove of a stroke, and then enjoying one's virtue for what remains of the day afterwards. a bonus, though, is the lifeguards in their two-piece bathing suits. most of them are junior college girls who have been on swim teams or are still swimming competitively. in other words, they're all, in their splendidly different ways, good-looking. their sunbleached hair and tans don't hurt their appearances either. because i swim a lot of sidestroke, always facing their chairs, i get a pretty good, casual view of them, without any need to ogle, as i coast up and down the chlorine.

i never flirt with them and, not surprisingly, they never flirt with me. but when spoken to, they are invariably polite and pleasant.

although they are much better looking than most movie stars or, certainly, what you would find in a topless bar, it's really not a matter of sexual arousal at all: it's much more analogous to that aesthetic contemplation of beauty, that stasis, that stephen daedalus experienced



observing the girl upon the strand,  
the moment that confirmed his commitment  
to the priesthood of art  
over that of religion.

i guess i made that choice  
a long time ago also.  
and whatever my priestly talents might have been,  
not to mention my obvious limitations  
as a poet,  
my engagement with beauty at the ymca  
is a good indication  
that i made the right decision.

## BANGERS

the day before thanksgiving  
there's this story on the news  
about the misguided genetic engineering  
of turkeys, how they're being fattened  
to the point where their legs can't support  
enormous breasts of the coveted white meat,  
and, if not caged securely, they literally  
fall on their faces.

what's more, they can't even breed  
by natural intercourse anymore.  
the hens have to be artificially inseminated.

the shocking thing, though, is that  
a representative of the british poultry board  
comes on to defend the practice with an  
ingenious glance over his shoulder at the feminists:

he says it's actually much kinder to the hens  
this way, because the toms are notoriously  
aggressive and ungente in their lovemaking.

i'm sure the day is not far off  
when human males will only be raised  
for their potential as sausages and mc nuggets.

## I'M SURE HAROLD IS GRATEFUL

i always wince when some writer tells me  
he's "given" his work to some editor to publish.  
"yeah," they say, "i decided to give that poem  
(or story or book) i was telling  
you about to harold."